

FDA: DOCKET No. 97N-0074
FDA/Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305)
5630 Fishers Lane
Room 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

0919 '99 DEC 30 11:01

I am pleased to learn that the President's Council on Food Safety is soliciting public opinion on methods to diminish foodborne illness in factory-farmed food. One obvious solution is to follow the European Union's example of a nationwide ban on battery-hen cages. American battery hens live four (or more!) birds per every cage with only 48 to 64 sq. inches per bird. They spend their sunless lives in gray warehouses, standing in feces from birth to death. These cruel, unsanitary conditions render the idea, "chicken is a health food" ridiculous.

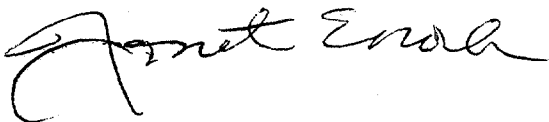
To reduce the stress and fighting due to intensive confinement, the birds are debeaked with no anesthesia. Debeaking fosters obsessive pecking behaviors, suggesting chronic phantom limb pain in the tender mutilated beak.

While an American ban on battery-hen cages may be years away due to a profit-hungry agribusiness, one immediate solution to our epidemic of foodborne illnesses is to prohibit forced molting—now. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: "[Between 1985 and 1998,] over three-quarters of Salmonella Enteritidis outbreaks were linked to eggs..." with causes cited in the report as "**heavy rodent populations**" and "**forced molting**."

The link is clear. When you starve birds for 10 to 14 days, they are placed under extreme stress. This suppresses their immune systems, making them more susceptible to salmonella infection.

It is in the best interest of the American public (not to mention the suffering hens!) to end this practice of forced starvation to manipulate egg production.

Sincerely,



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